

Militia Training: Operation WitWeb

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Preparing for last war

Most of the kinds of tactical training that militia units across the country have been doing have been focused on the tactical situations found in conventional or counterinsurgency warfare. And most of the alert systems that have been set up depend on telephone communications. While such exercises have some merit, they neglect the kinds of scenarios that we are more likely to face. This document describes in a general way a different kind of exercise designed to prepare militiamen for more likely scenarios, emphasizing reconnaissance, intelligence, and insurgency methods.

We call this kind of exercise *WitWeb* because it sets up a *webwork of witnesses*. Think of ourselves as a spider, spinning of web to catch some flies. In this case, the flies are corrupt or abusive officials or other criminals. Our objective is to gather and distribute evidence, protect witnesses, investigators, and other innocent persons, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Elements of Operation WitWeb

- (1) The operation should take place over a definite period of time, such as from Friday to Sunday evening.
- (2) Participants would operate singly or in teams of not more than three persons.
- (3) Each participant would initially receive an assignment to go to a specified location at a specified time.
- (4) At each location he would either perform some action and go to another location, pick up further instructions from a dead drop, or rendezvous with another participant, exchange recognition signs, and exchange items or further instructions.
- (5) Each participant would hit multiple locations during the course of the exercise, and would log the travel times, distances, and any other pertinent information about each leg of the journey.
- (6) At the end, each participant would report to a task leader, who would receive his report and any items he was to deliver.
- (6) One of the activities would be to reconnoiter a target site, find an observation point from which it could be surreptitiously observed, if any, and if found, describe the observation point to another participant, who would attempt to observe from that site for some period of time, while a

third participant would observe his observation to determine how well he was concealing his observation.

(7) Another activity would be to videotape a target, with the date/time record feature on, then rapidly exchange the good tape for a blank and hand off the good tape to one or more couriers who would escape the scene rapidly and in different directions, deliver the tape to a location where it would be duplicated, then execute a simulated delivery of the duplicates to key persons, to hiding sites, or to media contacts.

(8) Among the observation targets would be the homes of activists, the homes of straight government agents who might be the targets of actions intended to discredit the militia, mobilization points of enemy forces, or other locations at which some event of interest seems likely to occur.

(9) Each participant would have a way to alert the others in the event of trouble at a site requiring either convergence or dispersal, indicating whether convergence should be equipped to observe or to take protective actions.

(10) One activity would be to simply spread an alert message to all the militiamen in the area as rapidly as possible without using electronic media. The methods could include voice relay, coded written messages, or hand or light signals.

(11) Another activity would be to code and/or decode messages as rapidly as possible, using both technical implements, such as computers, and non- technical, such as one-time written keys.

(12) The exercise might be supplemented by recruiting persons who regularly live and work in the target areas to be alert and prepared to observe, preferably with video cameras, in which case they would be provided with a way to alert the militia to come pick up the video tape as soon as possible after it was taken, and provide a blank tape as a replacement.

(13) The list of observation targets would be continually revised and expanded, and observations made on a random basis, so that no one, not even most of the militiamen, could be sure when any given observation might be made, but also so that no one could be sure that any given target would not be observed during any given period of time.

(14) Video cameras would be supplemented with still cameras using high-resolution film, to get detail that video can't.

(15) Observers would make lists of relevant things in the area, such as vehicles and their license plates, so that statistics could be compiled and parties of interest identified. Of particular interest would be unassigned license numbers.

(16) One activity would be to collect trash from important sites for analysis.

(17) One type of target would be storage sites and vehicles transporting illegal drugs or other dangerous contraband, with special emphasis on identifying official involvement, so that when reported to authorities the militia would not be reporting it to the same authorities involved in making the shipments.

(18) One type of activity might be the actual interception of drug shipments, combined with the destruction of most of the drugs so that they could not be diverted by officials back onto the street, but leaving enough for use as evidence in court.

(19) Another type of activity might be the observation, in relays, of the movement of election ballots, from initial production to final counting, to identify election fraud. This might involve the use of hidden cameras, including the transmission of video to a receiver who could preserve the evidence in case the on-site observer got caught with the camera.

(20) Lacking more dramatic targets, participants might practice observing lesser instances of malfeasance, such as noncompliance with legal or contractual standards for construction, environmental protection, medical procedures, or other activities which are liable to occur in the absence of witnesses.

Working with other resources

These exercises are likely to turn into serious operations involving real corruption and abuse. Therefore, it is important to line up other resources that may be important:

(1) Straight law enforcement agents. But contact should probably be with individuals rather than with departments, which may contain dirty agents.

(2) Straight reporters. Again, contact should be with individuals who have proven their willingness to take personal risks to expose the truth.

(3) Straight elected officials. In most cases, the official himself may be too busy, but one should be in contact with a key staff person.

(4) Media messaging systems. One should prepare in advance to disseminate important information to the media generally, especially key persons with talk radio and TV stations, newspapers, and mudraking magazines. This should include a computer set up to email or fax to multiple targets. Messages should always be directed to specific individuals, with a backup if the first one is out.

Things to keep in mind

(1) Participants in this exercise should remain as inconspicuous as possible.

(2) Participants should remain mobile so that they do not themselves become easy targets for attack or apprehension.

(3) There should be preparations for any participant who learns "too much" to go underground while preserving the evidence, with everything needed, such as money, ID, a cellular phone or ham radio, a vehicle with plates not linked to him, or disguises, to remain underground for an extended period of time, while preserving the ability to maintain necessary contact.

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